I claim:

1. A system for self-service vending of an electronic toll collection device, the device comprising:

a payment acceptance device for accepting payment for the electronic toll collection device;

a dispenser for dispensing the electronic toll collection device; and

a processing device, in electronic communication with the payment acceptance device and the dispenser, for providing a stored value for the electronic toll collection device and controlling the dispenser to dispense the electronic toll collection device in accordance with the payment accepted by the payment device.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a communication link for providing communication between the processing device and a remote computer, and wherein the processing device provides the stored value by transmitting the stored value to the remote computer.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the connection between the processing device and the remote computer comprises an Internet connection.

4. The system of claim 1, further comprising a display, in electronic communication with the processing device, for guiding a user in purchasing the electronic toll collection device.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the display comprises a touch screen for both guiding the user and receiving commands from the user.

6. The system of claim 4, further comprising a key pad for receiving commands from the user.

26

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the payment acceptance device comprises a cash acceptor for accepting the payment in cash.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the payment acceptance device further comprises a card reader for accepting the payment in electronic form through a card.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the payment acceptance device comprises a card reader for accepting the payment in electronic form through a card.

10. The system of claim 1, further comprising an input device for receiving a number of an existing electronic toll collection device, wherein the processing device increases the stored value for the existing electronic toll collection device in accordance with the payment accepted by the payment acceptance device.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the input device comprises a user input device for manual input of the number.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the input device comprises a reader for automatically reading the number from the electronic toll collection device.

13. The system of claim 1, further comprising a bar code reader, in electronic communication with the processing device, for reading a bar code from a document and for transmitting information in the bar code to the processing device, wherein the processing device associates the information in the bar code with payment accepted by the payment acceptance device.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein the dispenser comprises a dispenser for issuing motor vehicle tax or license decals.

15. A system for self-service vending of an electronic toll collection device, the device comprising:

27

(a) at a first location, a vending unit comprising:

a payment acceptance device for accepting payment for the electronic toll collection device;

a dispenser for dispensing the electronic toll collection device; and

5 a processing device, in electronic communication with the payment acceptance device and the dispenser, for providing a stored value for the electronic toll collection device and controlling the dispenser to dispense the electronic toll collection device in accordance with the payment accepted by the payment device

(b) at a second location, an administrative computer for maintaining account information 10 regarding the electronic toll collection device; and

(c) a communication link between the first location and the second location for providing electronic communication between the processing device in the vending unit and the administrative computer.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the communication link comprises an Internet 15 connection.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein the vending unit further comprises a display, in electronic communication with the processing device, for guiding a user in purchasing the electronic toll collection device.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the display comprises a touch screen for both 20 guiding the user and receiving commands from the user.

19. The system of claim 17, further comprising a key pad for receiving commands from the user.

20. The system of claim 15, wherein the payment acceptance device comprises a cash acceptor for accepting the payment in cash.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the payment acceptance device further comprises a card reader for accepting the payment in electronic form through a card.

5   22. The system of claim 15, wherein the payment acceptance device comprises a card reader for accepting the payment in electronic form through a card.

23. The system of claim 15, wherein the vending unit further comprises an input device for receiving a number of an existing electronic toll collection device, wherein the processing device increases the stored value for the existing electronic toll collection device in accordance

10   with the payment accepted by the payment acceptance device.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein the input device comprises a user input device for manual input of the number.

25. The system of claim 23, wherein the input device comprises a reader for automatically reading the number from the electronic toll collection device.

15   26. The system of claim 15, wherein the processing device transmits the stored value to the accounting computer, and wherein the accounting computer stores the stored value.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the vending unit further comprises an input device for receiving a number of an existing electronic toll collection device, wherein the processing device transmits an instruction to the accounting computer to increase the stored value for the

20   existing electronic toll collection device in accordance with the payment accepted by the payment acceptance device.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the accounting computer is in communication with a violation processing center and controls the violation processing center not to process a toll violation if the stored value is increased within a predetermined time period after the violation.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the vending unit further comprises a bar code reader, in electronic communication with the processing device, for reading a bar code from a document and for transmitting information in the bar code to the processing device, wherein the processing device transmits the information in the bar code to the accounting computer for association with the payment accepted by the payment acceptance device.

30. The system of claim 26, wherein the accounting computer is in communication with a toll facility at which the electronic toll collection device is usable for paying a toll, and wherein, when the electronic toll collection device is used at the toll facility, the accounting computer deducts the toll from the stored value.

31. The system of claim 26, wherein the accounting computer is in communication with a computer system operated for a public authority for collection of motor vehicle taxes or fees, and wherein the accounting computer communicates an amount of the payment accepted by the payment acceptance device to the computer system operated for the public authority.

32. A method for self-service vending of an electronic toll collection device, the method comprising:

(a) providing a user interface for allowing a user of the electronic toll collection device to purchase the electronic toll collection device, the user interface comprising a dispenser for automatically dispensing the electronic toll collection device;

(b) automatically accepting payment for the electronic toll collection device from the user through the user interface;

(c) automatically providing a stored value for the electronic toll collection device; and

(d) automatically controlling a dispenser to dispense the electronic toll collection device in accordance with the payment accepted in step (b).

33. The method of claim 32, wherein step (c) comprises:

(i) maintaining account information at a remote location regarding the electronic toll collection device; and

(ii) transmitting the stored value to the remote location for storage at the remote location.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein step (c)(ii) is performed over an Internet connection.

35. The method of claim 32, wherein the user interface comprises a display, and wherein step (a) comprises guiding the user through the display in purchasing the electronic toll collection device.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the display comprises a touch screen for both guiding the user and receiving commands from the user, and wherein the method further comprises receiving the commands from the user through the touch screen.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein the user interface comprises a key pad, and wherein step (a) comprises accepting commands from the user through the key pad.

38. The method of claim 32, wherein step (b) comprises automatically accepting the payment in cash.

39. The method of claim 32, wherein step (b) comprises automatically accepting the payment in electronic form through a card.

40. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

(e) receiving a number of an existing electronic toll collection device;

(f) automatically receiving additional payment; and

(g) automatically increasing the stored value for the existing electronic toll collection device in accordance with the additional payment received in step (f).

41. The method of claim 40, wherein step (e) comprises receiving a manual input of the number.

42. The method of claim 40, wherein step (e) comprises automatically reading the number from the electronic toll collection device.

43. The method of claim 40, further comprising (h) controlling a violation processing center not to process a toll violation if the stored value is increased within a predetermined time period after the violation.

44. The method of claim 32, further comprising automatically deducting a toll from the stored value when the electronic toll collection device is used at a toll facility to pay the toll.

45. A method for self-service maintenance of an account for an electronic toll collection device, the electronic toll collection device having an identifying number and being associated with a stored value, the method comprising:

(a) providing a user interface for a user of the electronic toll collection device;

(b) receiving the identifying number;

(c) automatically accepting a payment from the user through the user interface; and

(d) automatically increasing the stored value for the electronic toll collection device in accordance with the payment accepted in step (c).

46. The method of claim 45, wherein step (b) comprises receiving a manual input of the number from the user through the user interface.

47. The method of claim 45, wherein step (b) comprises automatically reading the identifying number from the electronic toll collection device.

48. The method of claim 45, further comprising controlling a violation processing center not to process a toll violation if the stored value is increased within a predetermined time period after the violation.

49. The method of claim 45, further comprising (e) controlling a violation processing center to apply the payment accepted in step (c) to a toll violation.

50. The method of claim 49, wherein step (e) comprises reading a bar code from a violation notice issued pursuant to the toll violation and communicating information in the bar code to the violation processing center.

51. A method for self-service checking of an account for an electronic toll collection device, the electronic toll collection device having an identifying number and being associated with a stored value, the method comprising:

(a) providing a user interface for a user of the electronic toll collection device;

(b) receiving the identifying number;

(c) receiving a command to check the account from the user through the user interface;

(d) automatically accessing the stored value; and

(d) automatically displaying the stored value to the user through the user interface.